

...that both the UN and OSCE have special mechanisms focusing on freedom of religion or belief?

Both the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a regional organization comprised of 57 participating States from Europe, the former Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada, have conventions and agreements that protect freedom of religion or belief and related rights, including on assembly, association and expression. Both the UN and OSCE also have special mechanisms that can be used to advance religious freedom and call attention to violations.

The UN Human Rights Council has an independent expert, or Special Rapporteur, on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The Special Rapporteur, currently Professor Heiner Bielefeldt of Germany, monitors freedom of religion or belief worldwide; communicates with governments about alleged violations; conducts country visits; and brings religious freedom concerns to the UN and public attention through reports and statements. The position, which has existed since 1986, previously was held by Ms. Asma Jahangir of Pakistan (2004-2010), Mr. Abdelfattah Amor of Tunisia (1993-2004), and Mr. Angelo d'Almeida Ribeiro of Portugal (1986-1993). A comprehensive digest of the international standards on freedom of religion or belief, based on the work of successive Special Rapporteurs is available at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/RapporteursDigestFreedomReligionBelief.pdf> .

The OSCE has an Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, a consultative

resource that can provide expert opinions on proposed or enacted legislation on request from OSCE governments. The Panel previously was composed of 60 persons nominated by OSCE countries, including a 15-member Advisory Council appointed by the Director of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Since 2012, like other ODIHR advisory bodies, the new panel has 12 members representing an equitable geographical distribution of the OSCE region. The new U.S. representative is Ms. Engy Abdelkader, who is the Vice-Chair of the ABA Committee on National Security and Civil Liberties and Vice President of KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights.

For more information, see the discussion of international organizations in the thematic issues section of USCIRF's 2013 Annual Report, available here <http://www.uscifr.gov/reports-and-briefs/annual-report/3988-2013-annual-report.html>